

What is claimed is:

1. 1. A method of capturing and distributing media content through a computer network, comprising the steps of:
 3. comparing a plurality of clips of media content captured with at least one capture system against a set of trigger criteria, said trigger criteria defining at least one type of media content which is to be transmitted to a distribution system;
 6. identifying clips from said plurality of clips which satisfy said trigger criteria;
 7. transmitting said identified clips to said distribution system through said computer network;
 9. combining a plurality of said clips into a microchannel stream, each of said combined clips being associated with criteria from said trigger criteria that overlap at least a portion of microchannel criteria, said microchannel criteria defining at least one type of media content to be included in said microchannel stream; and
 13. transmitting said microchannel stream to at least one client through said computer network.
1. 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of subscribing each of said at least one capture system to said distribution system.
1. 3. The method of claim 2, wherein said step of subscribing comprises the step of receiving with said distribution system data identifying each of said at least one capture system and data identifying trigger capabilities for each of said at least one capture system.
1. 4. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of transmitting at least one set of triggers for said at least one capture system from said distribution system through said computer network to said at least one capture system in order to direct said at least one capture system to transmit clips of media content of a type identified by said at least one set of triggers.

1 5. The method of claim 4, wherein said step of transmitting said at least one set of triggers
2 is in response to a need for new media content to populate a microchannel.

1 6. The method of claim 4, wherein said step of transmitting said at least one set of triggers
2 is in response to a request received from said client.

1 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of transmitting advertisements within
2 said microchannel stream.

1 8. The method of claim 7, wherein said advertisements are transmitted proximate in time to
2 clips of media content related to said advertisements.

1 9. The method of claim 1, wherein said trigger criteria include an occurrence of an event, a
2 characteristic of said event, a characteristic associated with said at least one capture system, or a
3 combination thereof.

1 10. The method of claim 9, wherein said clips are video clips, still image clips, mosaic clips,
2 audio clips or a combination thereof.

1 11. The method of claim 10, wherein said event includes an appearance of an object in a
2 scene, a disappearance of an object in a scene, motion of an object in a scene, or combination
3 thereof, and said characteristic of said event includes a time said event occurred, a location of a
4 capture system, a type of content being captured by a capture system, a description of said event,
5 a size of an object in a scene, a type of an object in a scene, a color of an object in a scene, a
6 texture of an object in a scene, a direction of motion of an object in a scene, or a combination
7 thereof.

1 12. The method of claim 1, wherein said client is a web server that transmits a web page
2 including said microchannel, said method further comprising the steps of charging a monetary

3 fee for transmitting said microchannel stream to said web server over a period of time,
4 identifying any capture systems which provided clips that were included within the
5 microchannel stream served over said period of time, and crediting operators of said identified
6 capture systems a proportional amount of said monetary fee, said proportional amount
7 determined at least in part by the proportion of the total microchannel stream provided by each
8 of said identified capture systems over said period of time.

1 13. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of storing said transmitted clips in a
2 database along with data identifying a respective capture system which transmitted each of said
3 transmitted clips and data identifying respective criteria from said trigger criteria which each of
4 said clips satisfied.

1 14. The method of claim 13, further comprising the steps of receiving a query from a client
2 to search said database for clips having identified criteria, identifying at least one clip satisfying
3 said query, and transmitting said at least one clip satisfying said query to said client through said
4 computer network.

1 15. The method of claim 14, wherein said identified criteria is selected from microchannel
2 criteria defining a microchannel transmitted to said client.

1 16. The method of claim 13, further comprising the steps of receiving with said distribution
2 system an annotation regarding a clip within a transmitted microchannel stream and storing said
3 annotation in said database.

1 17. A system for capturing and distributing media content over a computer network,
2 comprising:
3 at least one capture system, each of said at least one capture system including a capture
4 unit for transmitting clips of media content captured by said capture system to a distribution
5 system through said computer network, said media content characterized by trigger criteria

6 identified by a set of at least one trigger which defines for said capture system at least one type
7 of media content to be transmitted to said distribution system; and

8 said distribution system, said distribution system receiving said clips transmitted from
9 said at least one capture system, said distribution system comprising:

10 at least one microchannel creator, said microchannel creator combining a
11 plurality of said clips into a microchannel stream, each of said combined clips being associated
12 with criteria from said trigger criteria that overlap at least a portion of microchannel criteria, said
13 microchannel criteria defining at least one type of media content to be included in said
14 microchannel stream,

15 wherein said distribution system transmits said microchannel stream to at least one client
16 through said computer network.

1 18. The system of claim 17, wherein said distribution system further comprises a database,
2 said database including a plurality of clips received from said at least one capture system along
3 with data identifying a capture system which transmitted each of said transmitted clips and data
4 identifying criteria from said trigger criteria which identifies the media content of each of said
5 clips, and wherein said microchannel creator creates said microchannel stream at least in part
6 from clips in said database.

1 19. The system of claim 18, wherein said distribution system further comprises a viewer
2 database query and access system, said query and access system identifying at least one clip
3 from said database in response to a query identifying search criteria and received from a client,
4 said query and access system transmitting said at least one clip to said client through said
5 computer network.

1 20. The system of claim 19, wherein said search criteria is selected from said microchannel
2 criteria.

1 21. The system of claim 17, wherein said distribution system further comprises a channel
2 arbitrator, said channel arbitrator communicating with each of said at least one capture system to
3 subscribe said at least one capture system to said distribution system, said channel arbitrator
4 receiving data identifying said at least one capture system and data identifying trigger
5 capabilities of said at least one capture system.

1 22. The system of claim 21, wherein said channel arbitrator communicates with said at least
2 one capture system to reconfigure said set of at least one trigger defined for said at least one
3 capture system.

1 23. The system of claim 22, wherein said channel arbitrator reconfigures said set of at least
2 one trigger in response to a need of said at least one microchannel creator for clips of new media
3 content.

1 24. The system of claim 22, wherein said channel arbitrator reconfigures said set of at least
2 one trigger in response to a request received from a client.

1 25. The system of claim 17, wherein said at least one microchannel creator retrieves
2 advertisements from a database and provides said advertisements within said microchannel
3 stream.

1 26. The system of claim 17, wherein said trigger criteria include an occurrence of an event, a
2 characteristic of said event, a characteristic associated with said at least one capture system, or a
3 combination thereof.

1 27. The system of claim 26, wherein said clips are video clips, still image clips, mosaic
2 clips, audio clips or a combination thereof.

1 28. The system of claim 27, wherein said event includes an appearance of an object in a
2 scene, a disappearance of an object in a scene, motion of an object in a scene, or combination
3 thereof, and said characteristic of said event includes a time said event occurred, a location of a
4 capture system, a type of content being captured by a capture system, a description of said event,
5 a size of an object in a scene, a type of an object in a scene, a color of an object in a scene, a
6 texture of an object in a scene, a direction of motion of an object in a scene, or a combination
7 thereof.

1 29. The system of claim 17, further comprising at least one client which is a web server.

1 30. The system of claim 29, wherein said web server transmits a web page including said
2 microchannel, said distribution system further comprising means for identifying any of said at
3 least one capture system which provided clips that were included within a microchannel stream
4 transmitted over a period of time to said web server and means for identifying a proportion of
5 said total microchannel stream provided by each of said identified at least one capture system
6 over said period of time.